CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT

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FINAL RECORD OF THE SEVEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-THIRD PLENARY MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 15 May 1997, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Berdennikov (Russian Federation)

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The PRESIDENT (translated from Russian): I declare open the 763rd plenary meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, the first of the second part of our annual session.

At the outset, allow me to extend a warm welcome on behalf of the Conference and on my own behalf to our guest speakers today, Mr. John Holum, Director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and Mr. Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. Their presence yet again among us today will no doubt provide us with the necessary impetus as we grapple with the programme of work of the Conference. I am sure that their statements will be followed with keen interest and attention. I am personally particularly pleased to welcome the distinguished Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Gryshchenko, with whom I worked for years in the Arms Limitation and Disarmament Problems Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union. I would also like to extend a cordial welcome to the new representative of Italy to the CD, Ambassador Giuseppe Balboni Acqua, and to assure him of our cooperation and support in his new assignment.

I have on my list of speakers for today the representatives of the United States of America, Ukraine, Egypt, Japan, Hungary, Morocco and Canada.

(continued in English)

I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, Mr. John Holum, Director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

Mr. HOLUM (United States of America): It is an honour again to present to this body the views of the United States, and to congratulate you, Sir, for ably discharging your duties as its President. Our delegation pledges its support in the weeks to come.

I want to discuss the progress and future of arms control, and the role of this Conference, which, I believe, will depend heavily on how it handles two key issues that are clearly ripe for its resolution. The first, a fissile material cut-off treaty, would take an important step toward a world in which the risks and roles of nuclear weapons are further diminished, and our ultimate aim, their elimination, is brought closer. The second seeks to free the world of anti-personnel landmines, for as President Clinton stressed again in his message to this body in January, our children "deserve to walk the Earth in safety".

The Conference on Disarmament has the capacity to succeed in both these vital negotiations. The evidence of that is manifest in its remarkable recent body of fruitful work. The Conference reported the Chemical Weapons Convention to the United Nations General Assembly in September 1992. It has now entered into force, with the United States, I'm more than happy to say, among its original parties.

(Mr. Holum, United States)

Last year this Conference generated the text of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, extracting all the consensus that was available. The United Nations General Assembly was able to adopt it without change, thus completing a quest long and ardently pursued by some of the international community's greatest leaders.

These treaties define the Conference on Disarmament. This is the body where arms control negotiations, not merely discussions, are conducted. This is where the world's substantive expertise on arms control, not just its polemical vehemence, resides. This is where every perspective, every region, every alignment, every ideology, every interest is represented. And as a result, this is a place where treaties of true global standing are given life, treaties like the Non-Proliferation Treaty, now with 185 members; the Chemical Weapons Convention, with 165 signatories; the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, already with 144 signatories, including 41 of the 44 countries needed for entry into force.

As President Clinton made clear in his message to you this January, the United States stands ready to help expand this body of achievement. But of course the Conference itself will decide whether it will solidify its tradition of success, or perhaps commence a slide toward the periphery of international affairs.

In short, this is a year of decision for the Conference on Disarmament.

Consider the practical benefits of success on a fissile material cut-off treaty. The objective of banning the production of fissile material for any nuclear explosive device is nearly as old as the nuclear age itself. The initiatives of such statesmen as Prime Minister Nehru in 1954 and Prime Minister Trudeau in 1978 confirm the historical breadth of support for a global treaty toward that end. Indeed, for many years it was championed by the Non-Aligned.

In 1993, President Clinton placed the United States squarely on that same side of the issue. Also in 1993, the United Nations adopted a consensus resolution calling for a global, verifiable treaty to cut off the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or any other nuclear explosive device.

But this body, having agreed two springs ago to a negotiating mandate, has found itself unable to proceed because a few delegations have chosen to block consensus even to initiate negotiations.

What, in practical terms, is at stake here? Two truths are dominant. First, fissile material is the modern chokepoint, the critical-path necessity, far scarcer than bomb know-how, in building or enhancing nuclear stockpiles. Without it arsenals can neither be established nor expanded. And second, new fissile material for weapons requires reprocessing or enrichment.

So the issue squarely before this body is whether these processes, in perpetuity, will be used only for reactor fuel, for peaceful research, for medical isotopes and other non-explosive purposes, and never again for nuclear

weapons. The issue is whether we can safeguard newly produced material to guarantee that the stocks available for use in weapons will not and cannot grow.

We would codify in a global, binding, verifiable treaty, what has only lately become a practice of the nuclear-weapon States, one that is eminently reversible, one that is predicated on the relatively benign geopolitical security environment that thankfully prevails at this moment.

Keep in mind that this is a constraint specifically on the nuclear-weapon States. They will be subject to a universal upper bound on how much fissile material can ever be devoted to nuclear weapons. All their highly enriched uranium and plutonium removed from nuclear weapons and disposed of could never be replaced. All reprocessing or enrichment would be declared and subject to international verification, for nuclear-weapon States and other States alike.

Moreover, this manifestly is arms control as well as non-proliferation. It is hard to imagine how nuclear arms reductions can proceed much further without a dependable limit on the nuclear materials, without confidence that any clandestine production of fissile material will be detected.

And this step is achievable now. For the treaty should be simple and straightforward. It could be accomplished relatively quickly. And it could even make use of an existing international organization, appropriately adapted, for implementation.

So the negotiating mandate for the fissile material cut-off presents this body with a clear choice. We can continue to talk about nuclear disarmament in the abstract, or we can get on with it in practice. With every passing week that the Conference avoids this next achievable step so plainly before it, the world must wonder, on what basis would a few States have it declare an endpoint for nuclear disarmament years in the future, when it cannot even begin work on cutting off the spigot for more nuclear weapons today?

What we need is simple: a "yes" to prompt commencement of negotiations on the basis of the existing consensus mandate. By undertaking and completing this negotiation promptly, this body can make an immediate contribution to nuclear disarmament, and keep faith with the United Nations General Assembly and the 1995 NPT Review Conference, both of which assigned this work here.

There is another constituency with whom we must keep faith. They live far from the diplomatic corridors of Geneva or New York. But we must heed their pain.

In the hour or so we spend together here, a senseless and avoidable tragedy will likely strike three or four innocent human beings. Somewhere in this time, a farmer in Latin America, a child in Asia, a mother in Africa, will accidentally pull a trip wire, or press a firing pin that will detonate an anti-personnel landmine and end their lives, or blight them forever.

(Mr. Holum, United States)

Anti-personnel landmines, or APLs, have catastrophic consequences for civilian populations. They are categorized as conventional weapons, in contrast to weapons of mass destruction that can wipe out whole cities at a time. But anti-personnel landmines are wiping out the equivalent of whole cities, a few people at a time.

We have it in our power to help end this.

A year ago this week, President Clinton announced United States support for banning anti-personnel landmines. In our view the Conference on Disarmament should promptly agree to commence negotiations, and complete a global ban at the earliest possible time.

Strikingly, no government represented here is on record opposed to starting such work. So why is this body only negotiating about negotiations, when the world demands that we negotiate about mines?

Aside from the paralysing obstacle of linkage to other causes, which I will address later, four main objections are interposed to an anti-personnel landmine negotiation.

First, an APL treaty is alleged to be a humanitarian measure unfit for this body, which negotiates arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament agreements. But is not such a distinction almost entirely artificial? Disarmament measures almost invariably have humanitarian effects. For example, the Chemical Weapons Convention was propelled in considerable part by the recognition that poison gas is an especially cruel weapon that operates indiscriminately, against civilians as well as soldiers.

Moreover, the humanitarian aspects of the landmines issue are being addressed in other ways. Many countries, including the United States, are contributing to the dangerous work of removing leftover mines around the world. And last year's amendments to the Convention on Conventional Weapons did much to address the humanitarian problem of civilian casualties resulting from newly emplaced APLs. What is needed now is a bold disarmament step.

The second objection is that an APL ban may not accommodate the legitimate security concerns of some States. But the Conference on Disarmament is a body whose procedures ensure that every serious concern is seriously considered. If a concern is real and garners more than isolated support, it will likely find expression in the Conference's product.

The third bar to negotiations relates to the mandate itself. Any mandate, if unduly specific, would contain something unacceptable to somebody. A draft mandate should remain flexible as to its particulars, so long as the ultimate destination is clear. Various routes to a comprehensive APL ban might work. Negotiations evolve. We need not be immobilized today by uncertainty about how to handle every turn and bump that may appear in the road tomorrow.

(Mr. Holum, United States)

The fourth objection is that APL negotiations here would be incompatible with the Ottawa Process. But simultaneous negotiations in this body and in Ottawa are complementary, not competitive. Each makes a valuable contribution. One is quick, involving willing countries; the other is broad and deep, involving every country represented here. They both pursue the same ultimate goal. Neither process need interfere with the other. Each can augment the other.

Complementary means that Geneva and Ottawa together can save more lives and limbs than either could save alone.

Of course, the Conference need not fear that it will be bound by any particular product or method of the Ottawa Process, for this body inevitably will develop its own text in its own way.

Those participating in the Ottawa Process do so with our good wishes. So long as this Conference bends to our common task, Ottawa's momentum and success should only inspire and heighten our own.

Both of these priorities - the fissile cut-off and the APL ban - are, of course, constrained by another obstacle: the proposition that the Conference on Disarmament should do nothing else until it starts negotiating the elimination of all nuclear weapons.

I detect an assumption on the part of some here, perhaps even an expectation, that eventually the United States will come around and agree to such negotiations, or at least preparations for them, if only so other important items can proceed. So I want to be very clear. The real obstacle to nuclear disarmament negotiations here is not the willingness of the parties, but the capacity of the forum. It will not work. It will set back disarmament. We cannot and should not agree to it. That is true today. It will be equally true next year, and five years in the future.

Does that mean nuclear disarmament is dead? On the contrary, it is striding ahead. START I implementation is under way. In Helsinki, Presidents Clinton and Yeltsin brought START II nearer fruition. And they set a vision for the next phase, after START II comes into force, with cumulative total reductions of 80 per cent from cold war peaks in START III, and the first agreed limits not only on delivery systems, but on the warheads themselves.

Clearly, the way to extend nuclear disarmament today is through the same painstaking step-by-step process that has produced such dramatic results in recent years. In contrast, bringing nuclear disarmament to this Conference unquestionably means halting all progress for the sake of a long argument over the ultimate destination, and when we must arrive there. Indeed, does anyone think any of our recent progress, including Helsinki, could pass muster here? Of course it would be blocked, because someone would pronounce it insufficient.

(Mr. Holum, United States)

But the strategy of linkage is even more pernicious than that. For it aims not only to bring disarmament here, and thus stall it, but would specifically deny the basis for arms control progress elsewhere.

Real gains in arms control and disarmament depend not on leverage or altruism, but on what is possible at a given moment as a matter of security. Recall that article VI of the NPT specifically places nuclear disarmament in a larger disarmament context, imposing this broader obligation on all States parties. It thus embodies the essential truth that nuclear disarmament cannot occur on demand or in a vacuum, but must be approached in tandem with broader improvements in the international security environment.

The permanent Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty, the Chemical Weapons Convention, are all just such improvements. The enhanced nuclear safeguards under review right now in Vienna are another, and will contribute immensely more to disarmament than every resolution ever written, and every pronouncement ever made, about how the nuclear-weapon States ought to do more. And cumulatively, all such practical advances explain the progress at Helsinki, and why further steps thought impossible just three years ago are becoming possible now.

A cut-off in production of fissile material for weapons would be another step in precisely the same direction. So countries that refuse fissile material cut-off treaty negotiations here are not only blocking one specific goal; they are undermining the prospects for the very nuclear disarmament they profess so fervently to cherish. Indeed, such an embrace offers strangulation.

So who and what are harmed as paralysis settles in on this body? The future innocent victims of anti-personnel landmines is one answer, mainly, of course, in non-aligned countries. The cause of disarmament is harmed, as tangible steps here, fostering further progress elsewhere, are stymied. And I suggest that grave damage can be done to the Conference on Disarmament itself, as its credibility, standing and effectiveness are sapped by months of inaction, foreshadowing an empty future. What an irony that would be for those States who have waited years to join the Conference on Disarmament only to miss out on its glory and share in its decline, as the real business of arms control seeks out more promising venues.

Of course we can escape such dismal prospects. But not without significant change from where we are today; not without restoration of the practical, methodical, problem-solving, step-by-step methods that have enabled this body's finest hours and greatest achievements.

Without further delay, let us return to work. Let us negotiate both treaties that are now ready for action and thus build the intertwined twin legacies of a strong Conference on Disarmament and a safer world.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the United States of America for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Mr. Kostyantyn Gryshchenko.

Mr. GRYSHCHENKO (Ukraine): It gives me special pleasure to address the Conference on Disarmament at a time when the presidency of the CD is assumed by the Ambassador of the Russian Federation - a neighbouring country which, alongside with the United States of America, is destined to play a leading role in global disarmament efforts and I would like to wish Ambassador Berdennikov every success in guiding the work of the Conference.

Last year was significant in CD activities, primarily due to the completion of the negotiations on the CTBT. More than 40 years passed before the language of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty, elaborated at the Conference on Disarmament, was confirmed by signatures of more than 140 States. Out of the 44 signatures necessary for the CTBT to enter into force, only three are still missing. In this context, however, the word "only" is not quite appropriate, since these are the signatures of the States with developed nuclear infrastructure that play an important role on the international scene.

In view of the fact that conditions for the CTBT's entry into force are not subject to revision, we have to consider seriously a set of measures to provide for the Treaty's timely entry into force, since it is not excluded that the technologically perfect though expensive CTBT verification system will be established and ready for functioning while the Treaty itself still may not be operational.

We believe that those States that have not yet signed the Treaty and are thus delaying its implementation should reconsider their position. One cannot strive for a nuclear-weapon-free world while rejecting the CTBT.

After a few years of intense negotiations on the CTBT, the Conference on Disarmament is facing the difficult task of determining its future course. In spite of the adoption of the CD agenda for 1997, the Conference has become seriously stuck in the deliberations over its work programme. Three major priorities were identified by delegations: a fissile material "cut-off", a complete ban on anti-personnel landmines (APLs) and nuclear disarmament. As far as Ukraine is concerned, we would like to see all three issues in the CD's work programme for this year.

So far, the conclusion of a multilateral agreement banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices remains the demand of the time, in spite of the fact that four nuclear-weapon States have announced the unilateral cessation of such production. In past years, the process of nuclear force reduction have been actively carried out and as a result of the dismantlement of nuclear warheads, the amount of nuclear fissile materials which might be reused for military

purposes is steadily growing. The storage sites of these materials are permanent sources of environmental and terrorist threats to all nations of the world.

For this reason, we believe that the scope of the treaty should not be limited only to a ban on their production, but the possible reduction of their stocks should be considered as well. Accordingly, the title of a future agreement might be worded as a convention on the prohibition of fissile materials for nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices and the reduction of their existing stockpiles. With such a wording, this item of the work programme of the CD would prove from the very beginning that a forthcoming instrument is intended to be a valuable contribution to nuclear disarmament.

This would undoubtedly increase the number of delegations wishing to start negotiations on this item, thus bring us closer to consensus. The scope of reduction of these materials has to be the centre of future negotiations on this issue. From the Ukrainian point of view the provisions of a future agreement must envisage the declaration of existing plutonium and highly enriched uranium stocks. To assure the universality of declarations, they might not necessarily indicate the purpose of stockpiling.

It would also be useful to establish the time-frames and rates of reduction of excessive stocks for each country concerned. The best solution would be the total elimination or reprocessing of the fissile materials for non-military purposes. The verification procedures of this agreement should be non-discriminatory and based on IAEA safeguards. Its main objective would be to monitor the declared fissile material production facilities for purposes of nuclear weapons or other explosive devices or those capable of such activities. At the same time, the procedures and technical means of verification should be adequate to enable detection of undeclared facilities producing fissile materials for prohibited purposes.

Finally, the future agreement, of unlimited duration, will not enter into force until all nuclear-weapon and "threshold" States ratify it. Therefore, we must obtain their support for early consideration of the "cut-off" issue and secure their constructive cooperation in the course of negotiations on a relevant agreement.

In recent years the attention of the world community has been concentrating more and more on the need to solve the humanitarian crisis arising from the large-scale use of anti-personnel landmines (APLs). This insidious type of conventional arms - as strikingly demonstrated in recent years - is fraught with danger for the civilian population in zones of conflict years and even decades after the end of hostilities.

Although initially APLs were designed for defence against potential aggressors, they have today become the source of terrorizing intimidation for millions of people, causing economic collapse in many agricultural countries by preventing farmers from cultivating large areas of arable land.

(Mr. Gryshchenko, Ukraine)

The First Review Conference of the State Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of Certain Conventional Weapons in 1995-1996 made an important advance by adopting amended Protocol II to the Convention, which imposes rigorous restrictions or prohibitions on the use of specific kinds of APLs.

In the course of this Review Conference, however, the need for a decisive breakthrough became evident. This understanding is embodied in resolution 51/45 S, "An international agreement to ban anti-personnel landmines", adopted by 155 votes with none against. In the meantime, Canada initiated the Ottawa Process which, supported by several other States, has gained strong momentum with the final objective of opening for signature by the end of 1997 a universal agreement on a total ban on APLs, including a ban on their use, development, production and transfer. We express our full solidarity with the noble aspirations of the States sponsoring the Ottawa Process and commend the results of the international meetings held in Vienna on 12-14 February and in Bonn on 24 and 25 April.

There is no doubt, however, that such an authoritative forum as the Conference on Disarmament is capable of playing and obliged to play a key role in the negotiations on a total ban on APLs. Therefore, long before the Canadian initiative emerged, Ukraine, like many other States, shared the view that the Conference on Disarmament is the best place for such talks. Even now the Conference still has a window of opportunity to prove its usefulness for solving problems requiring unordinary approaches. In this respect, the possibility of merging the Ottawa Process with talks in the relevant Ad Hoc Committee of the CD is not completely excluded.

Another approach seems to be more realistic: without competing with the Ottawa Process, the CD might complement it by negotiating a multilateral international agreement banning the production and transfer of APLs. We are convinced that the number of States supporting such an agreement would be larger and would include those States which still rely upon APLs to enhance their defensive capability.

Moreover, taking into consideration the CD's experience in the elaboration of the verification procedures of the Chemical Weapons Convention and of the CTBT, this forum might well in future start elaborating the compliance and verification procedures of the agreement on a total ban on APLs, which hopefully will be open for signature by the end of this year.

The inclusion of the issue of nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament's work programme for the current year was actively discussed during the first part of the Conference.

Today it is difficult to state publicly opposition to the idea of complete nuclear disarmament. The final document entitled "Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament" adopted at the 1995 NPT Extension and Review Conference emphasizes the necessity for the world community to make more active efforts in the sphere of nuclear disarmament. In article VI of the NPT the nuclear States confirmed their commitment to the

(Mr. Gryshchenko, Ukraine)

continuation of negotiations seeking effective measures in the field of nuclear disarmament. The Conference therefore has the relevant mandate for elaborating a programme of nuclear disarmament and determining concrete steps for its implementation.

In broaching the problem of nuclear disarmament, I cannot help but recall the exceptional contribution of Ukraine to this process. Having inherited the third largest nuclear potential, after the collapse of the USSR, our State took the unprecedented decision to completely eliminate these weapons. It is worth mentioning that, though it may have happened by chance, the beginning and the conclusion of nuclear disarmament in Ukraine coincided with the beginning and the completion of the work on the CTBT in the Conference on Disarmament. Hence, from Ukraine's perspective, complete nuclear disarmament is an achievable goal and it is necessary to find adequate ways in which to consider the issue at the Conference.

We welcome the "Proposal for a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons", submitted on 7 August 1996 to the Conference by His Excellency Mr. Zahran, Ambassador of Egypt, on behalf of 28 States of the Non-Aligned Movement, in which separate stages are to be implemented in a precisely determined time framework. We support this document and propose to adopt it as a basis for further work. Ukraine also highly appreciates the conclusions and recommendations made in the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

As to practical nuclear disarmament, the results already achieved in the course of the reduction and elimination of strategic offensive weapons are of the utmost importance.

To a considerable extent this was due to the fruitful work of the Joint Compliance and Inspection Commission (JCIC) under the START-I Treaty, where Ukraine, as an equal partner of this multilateral implementation body, contributed to the positive trend towards global nuclear disarmament.

One more key element promoting this trend is the ABM Treaty. Preserving the viability of this Treaty, through concluding a final agreement on the demarcation of the strategic ABM and TMD systems, has remained in the focus of the negotiations in the Standing Consultative Commission during the last few years, where our State participates as an equal partner as well. We expect the parties playing the pivotal role in nuclear arms reduction to make further steps to take all possible measures for the START-II Treaty's entry into force, to continue the dialogue in order to work out and conclude a new agreement on further drastic reductions in strategic offensive weapons - START-III. As soon as the provisions of START-III are implemented, it is necessary to begin negotiations among nuclear-weapon States to reach a further level of nuclear arsenal reduction and then their complete elimination.

At this later stage, the Conference on Disarmament would have to play a decisive role in elaborating a convention on the complete prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons. To prepare the ground for this important work

(Mr. Gryshchenko, Ukraine)

Ukraine supports the creation of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to be engaged in elaborating concrete agreements on nuclear disarmament and not to be used as a forum for stating truisms on its importance and urgency.

These could be the previously mentioned treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons, including the limitation of their excessive stocks, or a multilateral agreement on the commitment of all States - nuclear and non-nuclear - to strive for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. Therefore, before creating such an ad hoc committee, it is necessary to prepare a list of issues for its deliberation.

In this connection, we find very pertinent Japan's proposal to nominate a special coordinator on nuclear disarmament. Ukraine endorses this idea and considers it to be realistic.

In our opinion, Egypt's proposal concerning the mandate of the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament, which was tabled just after the conclusion of the first part of this year's session, deserves serious consideration as well. Obviously, the idea to conduct negotiations in the framework of this ad hoc committee, both on the issues of the programme on nuclear disarmament and the "cut-off" treaty, is undoubtedly productive and would help the CD in its attempts to achieve a compromise concerning the work programme for the current year.

The multilateral agreements in the field of arms control and disarmament are the fruit of the Conference on Disarmament's activity and the Conference has every reason to be proud when these pacts enter into force and become part of international law. Recently the Chemical Weapons Convention, on which the CD had worked for two decades, entered into force. This will inspire us to fruitful and effective work in future.

Last year's enlargement of the CD's membership will also contribute to this. The main motive for Ukraine in entering the CD was our desire to improve the work of this forum, to embrace a wider range of issues on its agenda and to achieve results that meet the high expectations of the world community, and we are ready to actively cooperate with other delegations to achieve this goal.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine for his statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt, Ambassador Zahran.

Mr. ZAHRAN (Egypt) (translated from Arabic): Mr. President, since this is the first time I am taking the floor under your presidency, allow me at the outset to express to you the congratulations of the Egyptian delegation on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament and our support for the consultations that you are carrying out so competently on the programme of work of the Conference. I would also like to express my delegation's gratitude to your predecessors, Ambassador Joun Yung Sun of the Republic of Korea and Mr. Pavel Grecu of Romania, for directing the work of the Conference so capably throughout the first part of our 1997 session

and also for the consultations they conducted during their presidency. I would also like to welcome the new representative of Italy in the CD, Ambassador Giuseppe Balboni Acqua. I listened with interest to the statements made by Mr. John Holum, Director of the United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, and His Excellency Mr. Kostyantyn Gryshchenko, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Before making my statement on nuclear disarmament, I wish to emphasize the fact that Egypt's position on all the topics on the agenda of the Conference on Disarmament has already been clarified in Egypt's statement before this important body, which is the sole forum for multilateral negotiations on disarmament, at the beginning of the session of the Conference in January 1997.

A few weeks ago the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons held its first session in New York. The Chairman's paper adopted at the end of that session reaffirmed "the commitment by the nuclear-weapon States to the determined pursuit of systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons and of the commitment by all States to the achievement of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control". That synopsis is consistent with the provisions of Decision No. 1 on "Principles and objectives" adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. We are all aware of the fact that the NPT is a key international instrument to curb both vertical and horizontal proliferation. Hence, emphasizing one while marginalizing the other would detract from the credibility of the Treaty. I do not need to reiterate the commitment of the Government of Egypt to the cause of non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. It is our view that a global non-proliferation regime to be implemented in phases would lead to the attainment of a world free from nuclear weapons.

From this perspective, and until the realization of the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, which is humanity's best assurance against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, we reaffirm the commitment of the international community to the universality of the Treaty with no exceptions. In addition, the credibility of the Treaty requires all of us to engage in serious multilateral negotiations to provide non-nuclear States with security assurances and safeguards. We also deem it essential to achieve equilibrium through a commitment by all countries to honour their obligations under that Treaty. Unless this is achieved, the non-proliferation regime would benefit some at the expense of others while excluding yet a third group which has not yet acceded to the Treaty.

After the NPT Review Conference adopted its decision on principles and objectives on 11 May 1995, we expected agreement to be reached in the Conference on Disarmament on the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to begin negotiations in this forum on that subject, to which we accord the highest priority, as reflected in the final document adopted at the 12th Ministerial Conference of the Non-Aligned Movement held at New Delhi in April. We regret, in particular, the view expressed during the

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

first part of the session of the Conference by some nuclear-weapon States that the issue of nuclear weapons should be handled exclusively by those who officially possess them. This view stands in stark contradiction with what was decided at the 1995 NPT Review Conference and raises questions concerning the true value that those States attribute to the decisions adopted without a vote at that Conference.

If nuclear disarmament is to be the exclusive concern of the five nuclear-weapon States alone, what is to happen in the case of the nuclear weapons that might be in the possession of other States which are not parties to the NPT and therefore have no legal obligation not to possess them? By the same token, we are concerned by the unsatisfactory implementation of article VI of the NPT, which stipulated, when it was signed in 1968, that the cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament would take place at an early date. This has not yet been achieved almost 30 years after the signing of the NPT.

While recognizing the tangible endeavours that are being made by the United States and the Russian Federation, as well as the positive bilateral commitments they have made in the field of nuclear disarmament, we also believe that it will be possible to remove this issue from the international disarmament agenda only when the total elimination of nuclear weapons has been achieved. To achieve this objective, much work needs to be done at the Conference on Disarmament in its capacity as the sole multilateral negotiating forum on disarmament. In keeping with this belief, Egypt has contributed to numerous proposals concerning the mechanism for negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the Conference on Disarmament. Bearing this in mind, the delegation of Egypt has submitted to the Conference a working paper, distributed in document CD/1453 of 1 April 1997, proposing a draft mandate for an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament to be established in the Conference on Disarmament.

That paper invites the committee to begin negotiations on a phased programme of nuclear disarmament with a view to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. It also calls for the conclusion of a convention on the prohibition of the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and nuclear explosive devices, since we regard this matter as a disarmament measure within the framework of the nuclear disarmament programme in accordance with the decision on principles and objectives adopted by the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. In discharging its functions, the ad hoc committee will take into account the proposed programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons submitted in document CD/1419 by 28 members of the Conference from the Group of 21, as well as any other proposals and future initiatives in this regard. Egypt holds the view that the proposed mandate for the ad hoc committee constitutes a balanced and flexible text which in no way prejudges the views of any delegation, and hopes that an agreement will soon be reached on this matter in order to enable the Conference to begin its long overdue work on this important issue. Therefore, I would like to request you, Mr. President, to include that Egyptian working paper in the consultations that you will be holding with members of the Conference, together with any other paper or proposal for the CD programme of work.

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

I would now like to turn to our regional concerns in the Middle East in order to reaffirm the importance of achieving universal adherence to the NPT. In this connection, we welcome the latest accessions to the Treaty by the United Arab Emirates, Djibouti and the Sultanate of Oman, which brings all the States of the Middle East within the scope of the Treaty with the sole exception of Israel, which, in turn, should adhere to the Treaty. Israel's continuing refusal to accede to the NPT creates an imbalanced situation and is giving rise to serious security apprehensions concerning the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, which would threaten the safety and security of all the peoples of the region, including Israel. It also undermines all the efforts that are being made at the international and regional levels to promote confidence-building measures, particularly the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, bearing in mind President Mubarak's initiative concerning the establishment of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East. For the speedy establishment of this zone, all countries in the region which have not yet done so should accede simultaneously to all relevant treaties - the NPT, the CWC and the BWC.

The adoption of a resolution on the Middle East by the 1995 NPT Review Conference and the fact that it was the only resolution concerning a specific region is a clear expression by the States parties to the Treaty of their concern over the seriousness of the situation in the Middle East resulting from the existence of ambiguous nuclear policies and unsafeguarded nuclear facilities in Israel endangering regional and international peace and security. Therefore, all States parties to the Treaty, and in particular the nuclear-weapon States, have an obligation to cooperate and to exert further efforts to ensure the full implementation of that resolution. The role of the depositary States in particular in shouldering their primary responsibilities as co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East is crucial in accelerating the implementation of the said resolution. The delegation of Egypt to the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference submitted a paper on behalf of all the Arab States parties to the Treaty (NPT/CONF.2000/PC.1/5) in which it reiterated the urgent need to assess the situation in the Middle East and to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the resolution on the Middle East with a view to the adoption of recommendations by the Preparatory Committee pertaining to ways and means to ensure the full implementation of the resolution and to ensure that all the parties concerned take the practical and urgent steps required for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. According to the formal statement by the Chairman of the first session of the Preparatory Committee, Ambassador Patokallio, time will be allocated at the second session for a discussion of the resolution on the Middle East.

Furthermore, the delegation of Egypt, together with other Arab delegations, presented a working paper to the last substantive session of the Disarmament Commission (UNDC) on the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. That paper was divided into two parts. The first expressed our views on the meaning of the phrase "on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned"; while the second gave an overview of the efforts exerted by the Arab States for the

(Mr. Zahran, Egypt)

establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. However, despite the willingness demonstrated by the Arab States to discuss substantive and practical arrangements for the establishment of that zone as well as a verifiable Middle East zone free from weapons of mass destruction, and to refrain from taking any measures incompatible with the achievement of these objectives, Israel is continuing to oppose any discussion of these issues in any forums, particularly at the regional level. In this regard, I would like to make it clear that the expression "arrangements freely arrived at" should not be interpreted in such a way as to allow a single State in the region, namely Israel, to continue enjoying exemption from the application of the international norms. Such a situation would be inconsistent with concerted efforts to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

We say "no" to those who would condone such a situation in favour of any country of the region. While international sanctions are being imposed on other countries under the provisions of Chapter VII of the Charter, we say "no" to double standards and selectivity in any international forums, whether in the field of human rights or in the field of disarmament in regard to nuclear or any other weapons of mass destruction.

In conclusion, Egypt has presented a number of proposals and has taken positive steps aimed at achieving a world free from nuclear weapons in order to ensure security and stability for the survival of mankind. Our position is derived from a deep-rooted conviction that peaceful coexistence, peace-making and peace-keeping are the only way to save mankind, protect the environment and ensure respect for all fundamental human rights, particularly the right to life and to health for present and future generations. Hence, there is a need to create an appropriate environment in which all resources can be devoted to the prosperity of our peoples, particularly by mobilizing all the resources needed for economic and social development in the developing countries instead of engaging in an arms race which will lead to further tension and a proliferation of conflicts between countries and peoples.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Egypt for his statement and for the kind words addressed to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Japan, Ambassador Kurokochi.

Mrs. KUROKOCHI (Japan): Mr. President, it is a great pleasure for me to see you presiding over the Conference on Disarmament and I assure you of my delegation's full cooperation. I would like to express my delegation's warm welcome to Mr. John Holum, Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency of the United States, and Mr. Gryshchenko, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, and thank them for their very important contribution. My warm welcome goes also to Ambassador Balboni Acqua, who recently joined us.

The current international situation provides a favourable environment for further progress in disarmament. Indeed, there have been a number of encouraging developments even since the negotiations on the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) concluded last year. Thus it is all the more disappointing that the Conference on Disarmament could not reach an agreement on a concrete work programme during its first session. My delegation would

(Mr. Kurokochi, Japan)

stress that its second session must not be a mere repetition of the first, but should reinvigorate disarmament efforts so that further progress might be achieved as expeditiously as possible. Indeed, the Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, has a particularly important role to play in addressing various issues confronting the international community.

So far in 1997, the international community has witnessed progress in disarmament relating to both weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons.

Concerning nuclear disarmament, first of all, substantive work for the establishment of a verification system under the CTBT gets under way with the inauguration of the CTBT Provisional Technical Secretariat. The early establishment of a verification system is important in order to deter any country from conducting nuclear testing, as well as to expedite the entry into force of the Treaty. Japan, for its part, is actively participating in the work of the Preparatory Commission in Vienna. Moreover, on 25 April the Government of Japan submitted the CTBT text to the Diet for ratification.

Secondly, we note with satisfaction the result of the first Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, which was held in New York just last month. At that meeting, many delegations emphasized that the new review process was qualitatively different from past practice. Thus, while important decisions were made on procedural matters, the participating States discussed, in depth, substantive matters relating to the operation of the Treaty and produced a Chairman's working paper. We consider this a very positive step and hope that the preparatory process will continue to proceed smoothly so that we can agree on forward-looking, action-oriented recommendations for the 2000 Review Conference.

I should like to add that Japan noted with great interest the statement made collectively by the five nuclear-weapon States, as well as the individual reports of nuclear-weapon States at the PrepCom regarding the concrete measures they have taken for nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. It may be recalled that United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 G, which my country sponsored, requests nuclear-weapon States to inform the international community of the progress made in nuclear disarmament. We believe that increased transparency in nuclear disarmament will contribute to building confidence between the nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States.

Thirdly, we welcome the new commitment made by the United States and Russia at the recent summit meeting in Helsinki to engage in further talks on the reduction of strategic forces in the context of START, and look forward to seeing concrete measures in this regard. In this context, Japan strongly hopes that Russia will ratify START II as soon as possible.

Moreover, in February this year, the Treaty of Tlatelolco celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of its opening for signature. As described in the Chairman's working paper, which I already mentioned in relation to the first

(Mr. Kurokochi, Japan)

PrepCom of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, important steps have been taken since 1995 to conclude additional nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. We welcome this progress and will continue to follow further developments with great interest in the belief that the establishment of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, enhances global and regional peace and security.

Turning our attention to developments relating to other weapons of mass destruction, we note that the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force on 29 April, and heartily welcome its ratification by both the United States and China on 25 April, thus making them original States parties to the Convention. We would like to urge other countries which have not yet done so to ratify this important treaty as soon as possible.

With regard to verification measures for the Biological Weapons Convention, we are encouraged by the result of the recent Ad Hoc Group meeting in which a general convergence of views emerged to prepare a rolling text by the next meeting in July.

Some noteworthy disarmament developments have also been made with regard to conventional weapons. Perhaps most encouraging is the fact that the tide of support for a total ban on anti-personnel landmines (APL) has become irreversible. Japan, for its part, will spare no effort to contribute to the international efforts to address the dreadful problems caused by APLs. The Tokyo Conference on Anti-Personnel Landmines, which Japan hosted in March to explore mine clearance measures, is just one example of such efforts.

In addition, we are of the view that it is important for us to realize, as soon as possible, the entry into force of Revised Protocol II to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW), which strengthened prohibitions or restrictions on the use of anti-personnel landmines. At present, the Diet of Japan is deliberating this Revised Protocol II, as well as Protocol IV to the CCW prohibiting "blinding laser weapons".

International efforts to elaborate ways and means of strengthening and further developing the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms are now under way. In March of this year, the Panel of Governmental Experts met to commence work on a report to the United Nations Secretary-General. The Tokyo Workshop in May considered various aspects of the issue of transparency in armaments. We look forward to seeing the further development of this Register.

A number of developments have been recorded following the second meeting of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms in January. In addition to the meeting held in South Africa last September, the Central American Workshop was held in El Salvador in January, and the Asian Workshop will be organized at Kathmandu this month. Furthermore, Japan, also, will host a workshop on small arms in Tokyo this month. We believe that these regional meetings will ensure that the report to be produced at the third meeting of the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts in July will prove to be a useful and important document.

(Mr. Kurokochi, Japan)

Against this background of ongoing international efforts in arms control and disarmament, it is somewhat strange that the Conference on Disarmament has not yet begun its substantive work this year. It is important that the Conference agree on a programme of work as soon as possible during this second session. My delegation continues to believe that the Conference should take up the following three tasks, namely, the commencement of negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT), the establishment of some mechanism on nuclear disarmament, and the setting up of an ad hoc committee on anti-personnel landmines.

The member States of the Conference on Disarmament, with very few exceptions, support the commencement of negotiations on an FMCT based on Ambassador Shannon's report. At the first Preparatory Committee for the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the need for immediate commencement and early conclusion of such negotiations was also reaffirmed. Thus we believe that the linkage between the start of the negotiations on an FMCT and the progress of other issues must be abandoned, and that the Conference should start the FMCT negotiations immediately.

My delegation would like to see both the nuclear-weapon States and G21 delegations take more flexible positions on the issue of nuclear disarmament. We hope that the Conference will agree to appoint a special coordinator on nuclear disarmament, as we proposed at the first session, who would guide our examination of the role the Conference might play in this issue.

Concerning APLs, while Japan considers the so-called Ottawa Process to be a valuable initiative to keep momentum on the issue, we are of the view that the Conference on Disarmament is an appropriate forum for negotiations on a treaty which could cover all key countries and hence be effective in solving the problem caused by APLs. The establishment of an ad hoc committee in the Conference for this purpose is thus an urgent task. In my delegation's view, it would not be necessary for us to seek a detailed mandate for the ad hoc committee as this might prejudge the modality of negotiations. It would be sufficient if we succeed in producing an agreement to establish an ad hoc committee to negotiate, in accordance with the United Nations General Assembly resolution last year (and I quote), "an effective, legally binding international agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines".

In order to make a contribution in this regard, Japan, together with Hungary, would like to submit a new proposal on a draft mandate for the ad hoc committee, which is attached to the text of my statement which was just distributed. I would like to request you, Sir, to be good enough to distribute this proposal as an official document of the Conference, and my delegation hopes that this new proposal will be considered favourably by other delegations.

If we cannot reach an agreement on an ad hoc committee immediately, we should, as proposed by Finland, Chile and Poland, appoint a special coordinator to facilitate this effort.

(Mr. Kurokochi, Japan)

My delegation is fully aware of the importance of our task during this second session, and will spare no effort in contributing to its successful outcome.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Japan for her statement and for the kind words addressed to the Chair. I now give the floor to the representative of Hungary, Ambassador Náray.

Mr. NARAY (Hungary): Mr. President, allow me first of all to join other speakers in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I am convinced that your well-known diplomatic skills and wide experience will significantly contribute to the successful conclusion of our ongoing debates on the adoption of a work programme and the establishment of the subsidiary bodies. I thank you for your efforts undertaken until now to this effect.

My delegation's short statement today is devoted to the question of a total ban on anti-personnel landmines. This issue is high on the disarmament agenda of my Government. We share the concerns of the international community at the grave humanitarian and socio-economic consequences of the large-scale indiscriminate deployment of these lethal weapons. Hungary is firmly committed to a total and comprehensive ban as the most effective solution to the global landmine crisis. This stance was further developed by a corresponding resolution of my country's National Assembly adopted in December 1996. The legislature requested the Government to pursue this objective and to support the related initiatives at the various multilateral forums.

Hungary has contributed to the Ottawa Conference and its follow-up meetings as a participant and welcomes the progress made in this framework. We believe that this process has helped to create and maintain the necessary momentum to promote the cause for a total ban. We reiterate our support for the complementary and mutually reinforcing character of the efforts made in different forums.

At the same time, it is our well-considered position that the Conference on Disarmament has an indispensable role to play in the concerted efforts aimed at the conclusion of an effective legally binding international agreement to ban worldwide the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. Based on this approach the Hungarian delegation decided to join its efforts with those of the delegation of Japan and table together with it a draft negotiating mandate. The document just submitted by Ambassador Kurokochi on behalf of our two delegations draws on operative paragraph 1 of United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 S and, for that reason, we believe it could serve as an acceptable basis for further negotiations and discussions in this body and perhaps attract widespread support.

Let me conclude by expressing my delegation's sincere hope that this proposal will be given serious consideration by the members of the Conference on Disarmament. Though our clear preference is for the early establishment of

(Mr. Náray, Hungary)

an ad hoc committee with a negotiating mandate, we can also go along with the proposal to initiate the process by the appointment of a special coordinator to conduct consultations on the modalities of the future negotiations.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Hungary for his statement and for the kind words addressed to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco, Ambassador Benjelloun-Touimi.

Mr. BENJELLOUN-TOUIMI (Morocco) (translated from French): Mr. President, allow me first of all to congratulate you on taking up the post of President of the Conference on Disarmament. The Kingdom of Morocco, which has excellent bilateral relations with the Russian Federation, is pleased to see a diplomat of your skill and experience taking over the task of chairing our proceedings, and I can assure you of our cooperation. Allow me also to thank your predecessors, Ambassador Sun of South Korea and Mr. Pavel Grecu, Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of Romania. I should also like to welcome our Italian colleague and say that I listened very carefully to the statements by Mr. John Holum of the United States and the Deputy Minister of Ukraine.

The year 1996 was a pivotal year in the history of the Conference on Disarmament. After long and difficult negotiations the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty was concluded. The Kingdom of Morocco signed the Treaty on 24 September 1996 in New York. Nevertheless, my country feels that it is urgent to strengthen the international legal machinery to combat nuclear proliferation as well as that for nuclear disarmament.

The end of the cold war, the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which gave to that treaty the permanence it had been lacking, and the conclusion of the CTBT constitute significant advances for international peace and security. However, while we should welcome positive achievements, we should not minimize the scale of the task remaining. In this context, nuclear disarmament remains an absolute priority for the international community. Nuclear weapons arouse apocalyptic visions and prompt legitimate fear in public opinion. The history of the use of nuclear energy for military purposes is also that of the collective dread it has engendered. As Montesquieu wrote, "opinions are shaped not by the mind but by the heart". The responsibility we bear today is to find an adequate response to the fears and apprehensions of the international community. It was long argued that the possession of nuclear weapons was justified for the purposes of nuclear deterrence, that those weapons, however dreadful they may have been, contributed to international peace and security. The world has profoundly changed since then. The cold war which for a long time crystallized the principal global strategic stakes is now over. Major efforts have been made in the field of nuclear disarmament within the framework of a reinvigorated American-Russian dialogue. My country, which believes deeply in the virtues of dialogue and consultation, is happy to see the idea of peace gradually replacing competitiveness and the escalation of the arms race.

(Mr. Benjelloun-Touimi, Morocco)

The efforts made in the American-Russian negotiations must be welcomed with great satisfaction. They reflect a real will to work towards nuclear disarmament. They would be strengthened if they were supplemented by a multilateral, complementary approach which, without calling into question the achievements of the American-Russian dialogue, put them on a truly universal footing. The Conference on Disarmament, the sole United Nations negotiating body in the field of disarmament, could make an effective contribution to this noble cause within the framework of a committee on nuclear disarmament. No one should minimize the difficulties associated with such an enterprise, but every long-term policy contains an element of dreaming and Utopianism. Today's dreams will surely become the realities of tomorrow. This is not just wishful thinking. The Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating body which should not prevent us from setting ambitious objectives because we know that the expectations of the international community are real. While our goals should be ambitious, our approach should be constructive and pragmatic.

In our view this approach could be based on the following elements. First of all, the Conference on Disarmament is a negotiating body and not a debating chamber. Consequently, on the basis of issues of shared concern we should commence negotiations leading to the conclusion of conventions on specific problems, particularly in the field of nuclear disarmament. Secondly, to carry out its task in an effective manner, the Conference on Disarmament requires a truly universal basis. The reform of the United Nations is a matter of great topicality. The Conference on Disarmament cannot exempt itself from the thinking currently under way in this respect. Naturally, consideration of the expansion of the Conference on Disarmament would be worth while only if accompanied by real political will on the part of all to work towards this goal. Thirdly, consideration should also be given to the efficiency of the working methods of the Conference, and perhaps more ingenuity and originality should be displayed in defining innovative negotiating structures. As experience in the last two years has shown, the Conference is all too frequently paralysed by the political divisions of another age.

It would no doubt be possible to continue for weeks on end to debate such important issues as the advisability of negotiating a ban on fissile materials, a phased programme of nuclear disarmament or a ban on anti-personnel landmines. At all events the Moroccan delegation will display the necessary flexibility on these three issues which are of concern to us and will do what it can to contribute to the emergence of a consensus on these issues. However, the real issues surely lie elsewhere. What Conference on Disarmament would we wish to see emerge as we approach the year 2000? What should be the role of this body? What can its new methods of work be? Is its membership truly representative of the world in which we live today? Is its agenda really well adapted to the new international situation following the disappearance of the East-West conflict? These are all issues which I feel require reflection and response. These matters may appear to be simply procedural. In the past they were used to block progress. Yet they are directly linked to the current stalemate. This is why my delegation feels it is urgently necessary for this thinking to begin. Otherwise we run the risk of continuing our discussions within a frozen setting and on the basis of outmoded political divisions, without any real prospects of success.

(Mr. Benjelloun-Touimi, Morocco)

It is undeniable, for example, that the political groups, as they exist today within the Conference, no longer reflect the new realities of the international system - everyone can recognize that fact. Similarly, the functioning of our groups engenders a kind of bloc logic which you hear referred to over lunch every day, whose consequences are detrimental to the smooth operation of our Conference. Perhaps the time has come to establish fresh bridges, to breach old taboos, to initiate courageous and innovative dialogues between political groups whose composition and functioning would more faithfully reflect the outlines of this new world gradually emerging before our eyes. I would like to take solely as an example the proposal just made by the Japanese delegation, or the one made at the end of the first session by the Iranian delegation, or the proposal by Egypt; perhaps we can see emerging a degree of transparency which scorns the group approach; in any event we must raise the question of new working methods. This is perhaps a new transparency which we should welcome, but it is also a subject for thought which we must address.

To ponder the future of the CD should in our view be a priority objective. Such thinking could enable the Conference to emerge from the slow death described by several speakers in which it appears intent on plunging. More than ever we need to make sure that this body does not become a kind of moribund machine reminiscent of those vivid but factual descriptions of the League of Nations described with irony by the writer-diplomat Albert Cohen. We have an obligation to achieve results, and we must succeed together in carrying out this process of reflection which I call on you to engage in regarding the future, the role, the make-up and the necessary reform of the procedures of the Conference. The task which awaits us and remains to be accomplished in the field of disarmament is immense and manifold. The stakes will be complex and the difficulties numerous. For its part, the Kingdom of Morocco continues to believe in the virtues of dialogue and consultation and remains attached to the international rule of law. Beyond differences of view, this Conference should be able to continue to exist, to develop conventions which will enable us to live, each day increasingly, in a safer world.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Morocco for his statement and for the kind words addressed to me. I now give the floor to the representative of Canada, Ambassador Moher.

Mr. MOHER (Canada): Mr. President, it is a pleasure to resume our work under your guidance. We look forward to a productive second part of our 1997 session of the Conference in the coming months. We also wish to welcome our distinguished visitors, Mr. Holum of the United States of America and Mr. Gryshchenko of Ukraine.

During the first part of our 1997 session, Canada made its views known on the CD agenda and work programme. With that discussion and decision behind us, at least temporarily, we should now move quickly forward. We appreciate that there are different views on the scope and detail of a comprehensive work programme, but three issues have emerged at the top of just about everyone's list: nuclear disarmament, FMCT and landmines.

(Mr. Moher, Canada)

On the first, nuclear disarmament, we welcome the statement that emerged from the Helsinki summit that will propel the two nuclear-weapon States with the largest nuclear arsenals towards even further reductions. The joint call by the United States of America and the Russian Federation to conclude START II and to engage in immediate negotiations thereafter toward START III is most welcome. Our expectations have been raised and we will want to follow developments closely to ensure they are fulfilled. And we look forward to the early engagement by the other three nuclear-weapon States in an extension of that process.

We also welcome the outcome of the recently concluded first Preparatory Commission of the strengthened review process for the NPT. The document which emerged from that PrepCom demonstrates that States parties have indeed created a qualitatively new and enhanced review process. As a result of the progress on substantive issues, we will have in place for the second Preparatory Commission next year a set of documents which will provide the basis for substantive work to be carried on as we move towards the Review Conference in 2000. Canada was especially satisfied at the wide range of issues on which States parties have already expressed consensus, including calls for progress on universality of the Treaty, early entry into force of the CTBT, negotiation in the CD of a cut-off convention, nuclear disarmament, nuclear-weapon-free zones, security assurances, the IAEA 93 + 2 programme and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. This success bodes well for future work in the NPT context and ensures that next year's session can begin where this one left off.

While the NPT process remains for Canada the primary forum where nuclear disarmament issues are discussed, it is not, nor should it be, the only forum. The CD has unique strengths and capabilities, not the least of which is its ability to discuss and ultimately define and negotiate on issues that should be the subject of multilateral negotiation. In this context, Canada has identified nuclear disarmament as a central issue that the CD must address. We have called for the establishment of a mechanism, an ad hoc committee if you will, for the substantive discussion of nuclear disarmament with a view to identifying if and when one or more specific dimensions thereof should be the subject of negotiation. The CTBT was one such example. We have also said that negotiations already endorsed by this body, i.e. on cut-off, should be immediately pursued on the basis of earlier agreement. We continue to believe that the successful conclusion of the an FMCT would be a positive multilateral contribution to the dynamic pursuit of our nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation objectives. Flexibility in deciding upon mechanisms to pursue this work remains desirable and several approaches could be considered. Moreover, it remains essential to recognize that, while issues in one field are relevant to others, progress on any specific measure should not be conditional on progress in any other.

The next issue is anti-personnel mines. On 21 January and again on 6 February we made our views known on the general issue of APMs in the CD. We continue to be prepared to work in this body on APMs; but the mandate for doing so must be clear and it must complement the ongoing work of the Ottawa Process, not be a transparent effort to compete with or dilute the Ottawa Process. That Process, we emphasize, is the demonstration of a

straightforward commitment by those countries currently in a position to do so to implement United Nations General Assembly resolution 51/45 S. Based on our analysis of the positions of many in this body, it is our understanding that the CD as such is not able to agree to such a comprehensive mandate implementing fully that United Nations General Assembly resolution. We acknowledge that reality.

Given that understanding on our part, but recognizing the desire of many to explore the prospects for some work on anti-personnel landmines in this body, I do confirm that Canada does not object to the appointment of a special coordinator to conduct consultations as proposed by Finland, Chile and Poland at the end of the first part of our 1997 session. May I also, at this point, particularly welcome the Japanese-Hungarian proposal made here this morning.

Let me reinforce that last point by emphasizing that, should members of the CD wish to undertake work on a specific dimension of the broader anti-personnel landmine issue, we are willing to consider such proposals in an open-minded way. This includes the idea put forward by some that the CD might undertake to negotiate a ban on the export, import and transfer of anti-personnel landmines, although we must admit to having reservations at this point about the desirability and viability of such a mandate. But, as already noted, we are willing to see this idea (among others) fully explored by a special coordinator.

Having set out these views, I emphasize that Canada for its part remains totally committed to the Ottawa Process objective of concluding, for overwhelmingly humanitarian purposes, a legally binding agreement to be signed in December 1997, to ban the production, stockpiling, transfer and use of AP mines. The comprehensiveness of that mandate, including specifically use, remains the critical factor. The commitment of others is growing. Successful meetings in Vienna and Bonn, and an extensive range of efforts on a regional level, are contributing to this momentum. We look forward to the Brussels high-level meeting in June and the conclusion of negotiations in Oslo in September. The Government of Austria continues its admirable effort to refine and adapt its draft treaty text which provides a solid basis for work in the Ottawa Process. We are determined to proceed without interruption to meet the objective of signing the treaty in Ottawa in December and thereafter of working towards the widest possible acceptance of that text. Intensive work on the global APM scourge is well under way and widely supported. We welcome the participation of all in a position to do so to participate in the Ottawa Process to attain its clearly set objective this year.

In January, Canada put forward its views on a draft provisional agenda for our work. We circulated at that time a list of provisional items which, subject to further consultations on organizational and related arrangements, we considered could constitute a basis for moving ahead. This draft provisional agenda captured our views on the issues I have already discussed. It also elaborated our views on conventional disarmament and the need for the CD to consider the negotiation of a legally binding instrument to prevent the weaponization of outer space. For the sake of brevity, I have attached a summary of our proposals to the statement this morning and request that this attachment be made an official document of this Conference.

(Mr. Moher, Canada)

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the work done in the Ad Hoc Group dealing with strengthening the BTWC. We look forward to the next session of the Group in July which will initiate work on a "rolling text" basis in order to conclude a legally binding instrument that will strengthen our confidence in compliance with the Convention, including through the establishment of an effective verification regime appropriate to dealing with a weapon of mass destruction.

Finally, Canada welcomes the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention on 29 April. The decision of the United States of America to proceed with ratification of the Treaty is most welcome. We also note the recent decision of China to ratify the Treaty. We call again on the Russian Federation, as the only declared possessor of chemical weapons not yet to have ratified the Treaty, to do so at the earliest possible moment. As a step in that direction, we welcome the political commitment by the Russian Federation contained in the letter by President Yeltsin before us today in document CD/1454.

In conclusion, let me assure you of my delegation's willingness to contribute to your ongoing efforts to get the CD working constructively on the issues before us.

Mr. ACUÑA (Chile) (translated from Spanish): On behalf of my delegation, I have asked for the floor to express, before the Conference, our delegation's support for the proposal made by Japan and Hungary concerning a mandate for an ad hoc committee on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines.

Mr. BALBONI ACQUA (Italy): First of all, Mr. President, I want to thank you for your welcome, and I thank also the other colleagues for the kind words addressed to me this morning at the beginning of my assignment. I join other speakers in congratulating you on your assumption of the presidency of the Conference on Disarmament. I arrived in Geneva a few days ago and I have to deal with issues which I fully believe have a decisive political importance and a strong impact on current international affairs.

After my arrival, the problem of the prohibition of anti-personnel landmines is one of the issues that in particular attracted my attention. I wish therefore to express my Government's interest in the early conclusion of an effective and legally binding agreement to ban the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. I add that the Italian Government is thoroughly engaged in promoting in the Italian Parliament early approval of a national law on the matter.

I am aware that this Conference in the present circumstances is facing difficult challenges. I wish to express my hope that on the important issue of APLs, as well as in other matters under our attention, it will be possible to attain concrete results in the months ahead.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the distinguished delegate of Italy for his statement and for his kind words addressed to the Chair. Does any other delegation wish to take the floor at this stage?

(The President)

(continued in Russian)

And now, in my national capacity as representative of the Russian Federation to the Conference on Disarmament, I have the honour to inform you that the Russian President, B.N. Yeltsin, sent a message to the first session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons now taking place in The Hague. The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation also sent a message to the session.

In his message the Russian President emphasized that Russia welcomes the entry into force of the Convention. In the period leading up to ratification of the Convention, Russia intends to refrain from any actions which would detract from the purpose and goals of the Convention. Since the time of signature, the President says in his message, we have honoured and will continue to honour our obligations not to develop and not to produce chemical weapons, not to transfer them directly or indirectly to anyone, not to use chemical weapons, not to carry out any military preparations for their use or to assist, encourage or induce anyone to engage in any activity prohibited under the Convention, and not to use chemical riot control agents as means of warfare. We have taken steps to ensure that toxic chemicals and their precursors are developed, produced and acquired, stored, transferred and used only for purposes not prohibited under the Convention. Preparations are also under way in Russia for the actual destruction of chemical weapons. Federal legislation for the elimination of such weapons has been adopted.

In its appeal the State Duma notes, inter alia, that it has embarked on the process of ratification of the Convention with the intention of completing the process if possible by the autumn of this year if the necessary conditions are met. Noting that difficulties involved in the ratification of the Convention stem from the exceptionally serious economic situation in Russia, the Duma emphasizes that, from the point of view of completion of the process of ratification of the Convention by Russia, it is important that in its decisions, the OPCW Conference should take into account the issues of significance for our country, such as the possibility of extending the deadlines for elimination of chemical weapon stocks, the procedure governing payment for inspection activities, the conversion of former CW production facilities and an increase in financial assistance.

The Russian President in his message also stated that Russia would be prepared to provide OPCW with information on its stocks of chemical weapons and their location and to take part in measures to provide assistance where possible in CW protection through economic and scientific technological cooperation. Both the President and the State Duma reaffirm Russia's readiness to maintain close relations with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, during this period of transition, which must presuppose the establishment and functioning of machinery giving Russia an opportunity to participate in the drafting and adoption of decisions taking into account its political and defence interests and would also create conditions for Russia's entry into OPCW in such a way that it could immediately play a full role in the organization's activities. It is hoped that the considerations set forth in this document will meet with

(The President)

understanding and that constructive decisions will be taken thereon. This will certainly facilitate ratification of the Convention by the Russian Federation.

I have requested the Secretary-General of the Conference on Disarmament to distribute the message from the Russian President and the appeal by the State Duma as official documents of the Conference. I understand that they are now in the hands of delegations as document CD/1454.

(continued in English)

With regard to the programme of work of the Conference, the consultations that I have held with individual delegations and group coordinators indicate that more time is needed to allow delegations to consider the proposal made by the Islamic Republic of Iran, as contained in document CD/1450, and the one made by Chile, Finland and Poland in document CD/1452. As you remember, at our last plenary meeting, on 27 March, Ambassador Nasseri of the Islamic Republic of Iran made a procedural proposal to the effect that informal open-ended consultations be held on his proposal when we resumed our session in May. This proposal was the subject of the Presidential consultations yesterday. At these consultations, however, no consensus appeared on this procedural proposal. There was a feeling that more time is needed for groups in order to take a position in this regard. It also appears that while there is, in general, no opposition in principle to holding informal open-ended consultations, the subject matter of such consultations is not yet decided upon, while at least one Group felt that this subject matter should not be confined to the Iranian proposal. I therefore urge all delegations to give serious consideration to all proposals before us so that we may be in a position to advance our process at the next Presidential consultations.

I see the representative of Kenya wishes to take the floor. I give you the floor, Madam.

Mrs. MOGAKA (Kenya): As this is the first time that my delegation is taking the floor during your presidency, Sir, allow me to express my delegation's gratitude at the skilful manner in which you are guiding our work. I requested the floor today on behalf of the G.21 to briefly address the proposal tabled today by Japan and Hungary. As this is the first time that this proposal has been drawn to the attention of our Group, the Group is asking for more time to consider this, along with all the other proposals that are before the Conference.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of Kenya for her statement and for her kind words. If there are no other speakers, I shall adjourn this meeting.

The next plenary meeting of the Conference will take place on Thursday, 22 May 1997, at 10 a.m.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.